

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 3

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-sixth Session

Virtual

27 September – 1 October and 7 October 2021

MATTERS OF INTEREST FROM FAO AND WHO

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

Ad hoc Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens

The Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL45), in collaboration with the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH50), approached the Joint FAO/WHO Scientific Advice Program to validate the list of allergenic foods and ingredients in section 4.2.1.4 of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* based on risk assessment and to evaluate the evidence in support of precautionary labelling. In December 2020, the first meeting of the Ad hoc Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens, held virtually, successfully addressed the request relating to the review and validation of the Codex priority allergen list by firstly identifying and agreeing upon the criteria for assessing additions and exclusions to the Codex list of priority allergens. Subsequently, the committee clarified the grouping of foods and ingredients on the list and determined whether certain foods and ingredients that are derived from the list of foods known to cause immune hypersensitivity can be exempted from mandatory declaration. The recommended priority allergens are cereals containing gluten, crustacea, eggs, fish, milk, peanuts, sesame and specific tree nuts (almond, cashew, hazelnut, pecan, pistachio and walnut).

In March 2021, to provide the science-based and risk-based advice on precautionary labelling and to respond to the request from the CCFH, the expert committee furthered this work on establishing recommended threshold levels in foods for these priority allergens, evaluated current analytical capabilities for the monitoring of food allergens and identified opportunities for improvements in testing methodologies and the reporting of results. Any presence of food allergens below the recommended levels is not likely to cause adverse reactions for most food allergic consumers.

The summary reports (<http://www.fao.org/3/cb4653en/cb4653en.pdf> and <http://www.fao.org/3/cb6388en/cb6388en.pdf>) for these two meetings were shared with the eWG on allergen labelling, while the meeting reports are in development.

In October 2021, the expert committee *will reconvene to provide guidance on the appropriate use of precautionary labelling for food allergens based on recommended threshold levels*. The planning for this meeting is on-going and the summary report for the meeting is expected to be available by year end.

Joint FAO/WHO update of nutrient requirements for infants and young children aged 0-4 years of age

FAO and WHO last updated vitamin and mineral requirements for all age groups in 2004. Since then, new data have emerged suggesting that requirements for some micronutrients may need to be updated, particularly for infants and young children. Therefore, in part to inform the planned updating of WHO guidance on complementary feeding and also to contribute to the on-going work of CCNFSU in establishing NRV-R for persons aged 6 – 36 months, FAO and WHO established an expert group to initiate the updating of nutrient requirements for infants and young children aged 0 – 4 years. Prior to initiating the process for updating the requirements, WHO conducted an initial review of the recent scientific literature on nutrient requirements, and compilation of national dietary guidelines from all regions, containing detailed information about nutrient requirements in the age group of interest. Using the data obtained from this preparatory work done by WHO, FAO and WHO was able to prioritize the nutrients to be updated (i.e. calcium, vitamin D and zinc as the first three nutrients to be updated). Based on the results of the scoping reviews, the scope of the work including the establishment of key questions in PICO format (Population, Intervention, Comparator, Outcome) was determined to guide the undertaking of systematic reviews which were completed in late 2020. A virtual meeting was held in January 2021 to review the results of systematic reviews and a follow-up meeting to discuss the additionally requested data for zinc was held in June 2021, at which further analyses and data

were requested by the expert group. Meanwhile the revised systematic reviews for calcium and vitamin D were completed. Additional meetings to complete the work on all three nutrients are planned for fall 2021. While the work on the first three nutrients was underway, the work on the next four nutrients (i.e. iron, vitamin A, folate and magnesium) was initiated, including establishing a new expert group and commissioning scoping reviews for all four nutrients, the latter of which was completed in July 2021. A virtual meeting or offline working session to establish the scope of work for the next four nutrients is planned for late 2021.

Scientific advice to develop general principles for the establishment of NRVs-R for older infants and young children

FAO commissioned a report to provide scientific advice to CCNFSDU on the details of Dietary Intake Reference Values (DIRVs) for protein and 24 micronutrients for older infants (6-12 months) and young children (12-36 months) in the publications of six Recognized Authoritative Scientific Bodies (RASB) and the Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization (FAO/WHO). The report assessed, categorized and ranked the methods used to derive these DIRVs and advised which categories are suitable for inclusion in the general principles to establish NRVs-R for older infants and young children. The draft report was shared with the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)eWG work on NRVs-R for Older Infants and Young Children.

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU) for the establishment of nitrogen to protein conversion factors for soy-based and milk-based ingredients used in infant formula and follow-up formula

At CCNFSDU39, the Committee requested the joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU) to provide scientific advice for the establishment of science-based nitrogen to protein conversion factor to use when determining the protein content of soy-based ingredients and milk-based ingredients used in infant formula and follow-up formula. According to the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures of JEMNU, key PICO questions were identified to guide the systematic review. A systematic review was then commissioned to experts in the fields of protein quantification and analysis, and the review was published in May 2019. Furthermore, to supplement the data obtained from a review of the scientific literature, a call for data was issued before the end of November 2018 to collect relevant, unpublished data available. A meeting of JEMNU to review and assess the quality of the evidence generated by the systematic review was held in July 2019. The systematic review (<http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA8805EN>) and a report (<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8862en>) presenting the outcomes of the meeting was submitted to CCNFSDU41 in November 2019.

Other information

UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016 - 2025

The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2016¹, aims to accelerate implementation of the ICN2 commitments, achieve the global nutrition and diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD) targets by 2025, and contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. As part of the mid-term review of the Nutrition Decade, the joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of the Nutrition Decade convened in 2020 informal consultations with Member States and non-state actors to seek their views on progress made, barriers encountered and gaps identified for the first half of the Nutrition Decade, from 2016 to 2020, as well as on focus areas for priority action for the second half of the Nutrition Decade, from 2021 to 2025². In 2021, UN Nutrition facilitated an online consultation using the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition platform to inform an update of the Decade's Work Programme with 185 persons from 64 Member States responding. Responses will be considered revising the Decade's Work Programme until 2025.

Increasingly, action networks, with global or regional scope, aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around specific topics linked to an action area of the work programme of the Nutrition Decade are being established. Norway is leading a global action network on sustainable food from the oceans and inland waters for food security and nutrition (<https://nettsteder.regjeringen.no/foodfromtheocean/>). Australia, France and Chile are leading a global action network aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around nutrition labelling. The Network is established to exchange country experiences and good practices, share successes and challenges, and provide mutual support to accelerate implementation of effective nutrition labelling policies.

Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is an inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together to ensure food security and good nutrition for all. The Committee reports to

¹ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/259>.

² www.un.org/nutrition/about/

the UN General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and to FAO Conference. During its 47th plenary session in February 2021, CFS endorsed the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN).³ The objective of the VGFSyN is to contribute to achieving sustainable food systems and improved nutrition, recalling that transformation of food systems should be encouraged in a coherent manner, as appropriate and in accordance with and dependent on national contexts and capacities, in accordance with the three dimensions of sustainable development. The aim is also to present a set of recommendations that help ensure that healthy diets are accessible, available, affordable, safe and of adequate quality and quantity, conforming with beliefs, culture and traditions, dietary habits, and preferences of individuals, in accordance with national and international laws and obligations. The VGFSyN took evidence from a range of rigorous studies, based on scientific, interdisciplinary, traditional, indigenous and local knowledge, sustainable practices and experience. Much of the evidence comes from the report prepared by the CFS High Level Panel of Experts⁴, various UN technical documents, and peer-reviewed scientific literature. FAO will encourage the use of the VGFSyN by its Members in conjunction with other specialized science and evidence based standards, normative guidelines and recommendations that provide further explanation and detail for action.

In addition, WHO, as active member of the CFS Advisory Group, supported CFS work on the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the CFS virtual event on 'Resilient food supply chains and workers' health during COVID-19'⁵ and its background paper⁶, where the recommendations on food workers safety during COVID-19 jointly prepared by FAO and WHO were presented, and their use through the development of localized versions and illustrated manuals encouraged.

FAO/WHO International Consultation on Sustainable Healthy Diets

FAO and WHO jointly organized an International Consultation on Sustainable Healthy Diets in July 2019 at FAO Headquarters. Prior to the consultation, 5 background papers were commissioned, which were later published as a supplement in *Food and Nutrition Bulletin* (https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/fnb/41/2_suppl). The joint endeavor led to the description that "sustainable healthy diets are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals' health and wellbeing, have low environmental pressure and impact, are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable, and are culturally acceptable." The consultation led to the development of 16 Guiding Principles that take a holistic approach to diets - they consider international nutrition recommendations, the environmental cost of food production and consumption, and the adaptability to local social, cultural and economic contexts. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6640en/ca6640en.pdf>.

As a subsequent step to the development of the Sustainable Healthy Diet Guiding Principles, ongoing efforts are focused on translating the Guiding Principles into metrics need to understand trends, set targets, and monitor progress on sustainable healthy diets at national and subnational levels. Furthermore, FAO is currently performing a literature scoping review aimed at describing how sustainable healthy diets have been defined and measured in the research literature over the past decade. It is planned that the results of the literature scoping review will be published in a peer-reviewed journal in 2021.

In May 2021, WHO, FAO, and UNICEF jointly organized a Measuring Healthy Diets conference⁷ as a result of the continued work under the TEAM⁸ initiative. The goal of the conference was to promote increased communication, coordination, and collaboration on the topic diet quality, in order to accelerate progress towards identifying or developing a parsimonious set of metrics for global monitoring of healthy diets (informed by Guiding Principles 2-7). A report from the conference will be published by the end of 2021.

³ www.fao.org/cfs/workingspace/workstreams/nutrition-workstream/en/

⁴ www.fao.org/3/i7846e/i7846e.pdf

⁵ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1920/COVID-19/COVID-19_2-Chair_Summary_28_July_2020.pdf

⁶ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1920/COVID-19/CFS_COVID-19_Discussion_Paper_FINAL2.pdf

⁷ Technical Consultation on Measuring Healthy Diets: Concepts, Methods, and Metrics, hosted by WHO, UNICEF and FAO, held May 18-20, 2021.

⁸ Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM), advisors to WHO and UNICEF on how to improve the quality of nutrition monitoring efforts at all levels.

Global Food Consumption Databases

The FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT) is an open-access online platform, hosted by FAO and supported by WHO, providing access to harmonised individual quantitative food consumption data, especially in low- and middle-income countries. This comprehensive database is a multipurpose tool and provides simple and accurate food-based indicators, derived from sex and age disaggregated data on individual food consumption that are needed in the fields of nutrition and food safety, in particular on assessing dietary exposure. The food classification and description system used is called FoodEx2. It has been developed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and was enhanced for use at a global level. The tool is freely accessible online through an interactive web platform: <http://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/en/>. FAO/WHO GIFT is currently being populated with microdata from surveys that the end user can download for secondary analysis. To date, the platform contains microdata from 25 surveys (9 national and 16 sub-national). The platform also contains an inventory map with detailed information on 284 surveys (144 are national and 140 are sub-national), mainly from low and middle-income countries. The FAO/WHO GIFT platform is available at <http://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/en/>.

FAO ACTIVITIES

FAO activities on Food Labelling

At the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), governments affirmed that the “empowerment of consumers is necessary through improved and evidence-based health and nutrition information and education to make informed choices regarding consumption of food products for healthy dietary practices” (FAO/WHO 2014). Food labelling was included among the recommendations in the ICN2 Framework for Action (FAO/WHO, 2014). To this end, FAO has developed the following tools on food labelling for developing the capacity in countries to implement food labelling policies and programmes.

The FAO website on Food Labelling (<http://www.fao.org/food-labelling/en/>) and provides information on Food Labelling standards and guidelines and FAO activities on food labelling. The website is being developed in 2021 to serve as a repository and platform for information exchange on dietary guidelines from across the world.

FAO has commissioned studies to identify policies to support micro, small and medium food processing companies in the implementation of front of pack nutrition labelling. Country level policy analyses will be conducted in Chile and Brazil and resulting reports are expected to be published in 2023.

FAO with the support of the Japanese cooperation is implementing capacity development at different levels in Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam aiming to scale up capacities of small and medium size enterprises for nutrition-sensitive food systems including implementation of food labelling. Activities include the introduction of mentoring programmes for local SMEs and the organization of e-learning programmes and workshops to boost the skills and competencies that SMEs need to better perform in local markets.

A handbook on food labelling that provides an introduction to labelling as part of an ongoing effort to assist regulators and others working in the area of food systems who are responsible for formulating and implementing food labelling policies. Specific types of labels are explained such as ingredient lists (including allergen and food additive information), date marking, nutrition labels (back of pack panels and front of pack systems) as well as nutrient and health claims. Relevant sections of the book follow the guidance given by the Codex Alimentarius Commission on food labelling in particular the Codex *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985). The handbook is available in English and has also been translated in French at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/fc5f4bc2-650a-4704-9162-9eb9b3a1fdd0/> and <https://doi.org/10.4060/i6575fr>.

FAO's Role on supporting countries in their development of labels contributing to sustainable food system

FAO is supporting the development of quality linked to geographical origin products that will contribute to rural development. Geographical Indications (GIs) refer to products with specific characteristics, qualities or reputation resulting essentially from their geographical origin. GIs are legal tools for protection of intellectual property rights according to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of the World Trade Organization and the Geneva Act of the Lisbon agreement of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). GIs are also tools for sustainable food system development as they could facilitate direct management by the local community of producers and the preservation of local natural resources. Origin-based labels preserve and add value to traditional quality food products, for the benefit of producers, especially family farmers and smallholders, but also for consumers, promoting better access to nutritious local food. A new thematic website is now online to inform on FAO vision and activities on this topic (www.fao.org/geographical-indications).

FAO/INFOODS Food Composition Databases

FAO coordinates the International Network of Food Data Systems (INFOODS), a worldwide network of food composition experts aiming to improve the quality, availability, reliability and use of food composition data. These data are necessary, for example, for the assessment of diet quality, for the development and application of food based dietary guidelines and nutrition labelling or selected Codex standards.

FAO/INFOODS is on-going to prepare a new food composition table for Ethiopia and the FAO/INFOODS Evaluation Framework to Assess the Quality of Published Food Composition Tables and Databases (FCT/FCDBs) – (Evaluation Framework), is expected to be published in 2021.

The databases can be downloaded from the FAO/INFOODS website: <http://www.fao.org/infoods/infoods/en/>

COVID-19

As the global COVID-19 pandemic evolves, FAO continues its efforts to keep Member States informed about matters relating to COVID-19 nutrition and food safety. FAO has published numerous policy and guidance documents to aid their members in managing the current global crisis and minimizing the impact of the pandemic. FAO's unique portal to all aspects of its work on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is accessible at: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/>

Development of the Vision and Strategy for FAO's work in Nutrition

After a thorough two-year consultative and iterative process, the Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (the Nutrition Strategy)⁹ was endorsed at the 166th Session of the FAO Council in April 2021. The Nutrition Strategy articulates FAO's vision for nutrition and provides a framework to guide and prioritize FAO's action to enable healthy diets and positively impact nutrition outcomes over the next five years. The Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (FAO's Nutrition Strategy) highlights FAO's role in enabling healthy diets, to advance efforts towards reaching global nutrition targets and the SDGs. FAO's Nutrition Strategy also aligns with the Organization's Strategic Framework to leverage all areas of technical expertise towards achieving the four aspirations of Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life. It aims to support countries in enabling healthy diets and boosting the capacity of all actors along the agri-food system to continue producing and delivering affordable, adequate, safe, diverse and culturally appropriate diets. Grounded in a food systems approach and its guiding principles, the strategy highlights the Organization's role in enabling healthy diets, to advance efforts towards achieving targets across the SDGs, especially those of SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG10, SDG 12, SDG 14, and SDG 17.

FAO's Role in supporting countries to develop and implement Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs)

1. The FAO website on Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) was launched in November 2014, and serves as a repository and platform for information exchange on dietary guidelines from across the world. In 2021, the website has been revamped and more than 60 countries have been contacted to update their information and share their experiences. To access the FAO website on FBDGs: <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/nutrition-education/food-dietary-guidelines/en/>.
2. Direct technical assistance has been provided the Governments of Afghanistan and Sierra Leone to develop national FBDGs. Technical assistance for the revision of FBDGs was also provided to a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to develop or revise their national FBDGs.
3. FAO's Global Guidance on FBDGs: In 2018, FAO, along with partners, started a transformative strategy for FBDGs to reflect the global call of enhancing and repurposing FBDGs, including the development of a new methodology and global guidance manual to help Member Countries advance the role of dietary guidelines, by transitioning from food-based dietary guidelines to food-systems based dietary guidelines.

FAO's role in school food and nutrition

FAO recognizes schoolchildren as a priority population for nutrition interventions and views the school as an ideal setting to support the nutrition and development of children and adolescents. In this regard, FAO's School Food and Nutrition Framework is based on a systemic approach that leverages on and purposely creates synergies between four main areas of work that are at the heart of the Organization's mandate and capacity. These four areas are the school food environment, school-based food and nutrition education (SFNE), stimulating inclusive procurement and value chains for school food and supporting the political, legal, financial and institutional environment. More information on FAO's role in schools is available at: <http://www.fao.org/school-food/en/>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ne853en/ne853en.pdf>

Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women (MDD-W) – A global standardized food-based indicator for monitoring dietary diversity and micronutrient adequacy of women's diets

The Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) is a dichotomous indicator of whether or not women of reproductive age (15-49 years of age) have consumed at least five out of ten defined food groups the previous day or night. The proportion of these women who reach this minimum in a population can be used as a proxy indicator for higher probability of dietary adequacy of 11 micronutrients. The indicator measures dietary diversity and micronutrient adequacy, two important dimensions of diet quality. With support from the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), FAO concluded in 2021 a research project to refine MDD-W data collection tools, with capacity development and data collection activities in three focus countries - Cambodia, Ethiopia and Zambia. The results of the study have been published in an Updated User Guide [*http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3434en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3434en) and a scientific paper (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7400839/>).

WHO ACTIVITIES

COVID-19

A Healthy@Home Healthy Diet¹⁰ webpage has been published including food safety tips and a video on the “5 keys to safer food”. A Healthy Diet information brief “Healthy diets to maintain nutritional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic” is soon to be published bringing together main content and messages on healthy diets based on existing WHO guidelines and other WHO documents.

WHO is assessing health service disruption due to COVID-19 including immunization, NCDs, mental health and essential health services (EHS) and these pulse surveys are happening on a quarterly basis. The second round of the national pulse survey on Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (SRMNAH) on continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic (January-March 2021) has been published¹¹. It contains information on the management of moderate and severe malnutrition as well as nutrition linked health services like antenatal care, postnatal care for women and newborns, WHO has published a country and regional dashboard for tracking continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic¹². A nutrition questionnaire module is under development for the third round of the national pulse survey.

Q&As for pregnancy and childbirth¹³, breastfeeding¹⁴, food safety for consumers¹⁵, food safety authorities¹⁶, and food businesses¹⁷ have been developed. A frequently asked questions on COVID-19 vaccines and breastfeeding based on WHO SAGE interim recommendations is currently underway partnering with IFE Core Group, UNICEF and USAID.

WHO has published the following documents on Nutrition and Food Safety related to COVID-19

- [Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets](#)¹⁸
- [COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for competent authorities responsible for national food safety control systems](#)¹⁹
- [COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for Food Businesses](#)²⁰
- [Breastfeeding and COVID-19](#)²¹
- [Maintaining essential health services: operational guidance for the COVID-19 context interim guidance](#)²²

¹⁰ <https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---healthy-diet>

¹¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-EHS-continuity-survey-2021.1>

¹² <https://www.who.int/teams/integrated-health-services/monitoring-health-services/national-pulse-survey-on-continuity-of-essential-health-services-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/dashboard>

¹³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pregnancy-and-childbirth>

¹⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-breastfeeding>

¹⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-safety-for-consumers>

¹⁶ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-safety-authorities>

¹⁷ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-businesses>

¹⁸ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food-safety-traditional-markets-2021.1>

¹⁹ https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food_Safety_authorities-2020.1

²⁰ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/covid-19-and-food-safety-guidance-for-food-businesses>

²¹ https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Sci_Brief-Breastfeeding-2020.1

²² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-essential-health-services-2020.1>

- [Community-based health care, including outreach and campaigns, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)²³

UN Food Systems Summit 2021 (UNFSS)

WHO is the UN anchor agency of Action Track 2 and works with its members as well as across Action Tracks to ensure that food systems deliver healthy and safe diets and improve people's health and well-being. WHO offers its guidance and guidelines, implementation tools and databases to inform the food systems transformation. WHO encourage stakeholders to use a health lens when formulating game changing solutions and assessing impact. WHO is developing a new narrative on food systems impact on health and has published the summary of the document²⁴, highlighting the five impact pathways (including a pathway on unsafe and adulterated foods, and a pathway on zoonotic pathogens and antimicrobial resistance).

WHO is leading a solution cluster on One Health and AMR²⁵ and is engaging in Action Track 1 on food safety in different food safety related solution clusters including in cluster 1.3.1 on "Develop low- and middle-income country capacity to track foodborne disease and improve food safety performance"²⁶ to develop a global food safety index.

For the Pre-Summit, which took place in Rome (26-28 July), the UNICEF and WHO Principals published a joint statement²⁷ advocating to put children at the heart of food systems transformation with an accompanying video. For the Action Track 2 session²⁸ at the Pre-Summit, the WHO Deputy Director-General delivered the keynote speech. In that session, the Minister of Health of Ethiopia, Dr Lia Tadesse, highlighted the importance of food safety and the fight against AMR.

WHO guideline development on efficacy, safety, and effectiveness of ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) with reduced milk-protein content

WHO has completed the process to review the efficacy, effectiveness, and safety of the new RUTF formulations (containing alternative sources of protein (non-dairy) or less than 50% of proteins coming from milk or other dairy products) for treating infants and children aged 6 months or older with severe acute malnutrition who have appetite and no medical complications. The WHO normative process also includes retrieval, assessment and summary of evidence on values and preferences (i.e. cultural, religious), inter/intra-household sharing, acceptability, adherence, equity, feasibility, accessibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness in different settings. For this purpose, WHO convened the first meeting of the WHO guideline development group – RUTF on 7 November 2019. The main objectives of this meeting were to: i) introduce members of the guideline development group to the WHO guideline development process, including Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) methodology; ii) discuss PICO questions and prioritization of the outcomes; iii) agree on the timeframe for the guideline process. The second meeting of the WHO guideline development group was held virtually on 21 – 24 July 2020, with the objective to review and discuss the results of the systematic reviews and formulate recommendations for the efficacy, safety, and effectiveness of ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) with reduced or no milk-protein content. The following recommendation was agreed upon based on the available evidence to date: Standard RUTF (with at least 50% of protein coming from dairy products) is recommended for outpatient treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition. Use of RUTF formulations with less than 50% of protein from dairy products for outpatient treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition is encouraged within research and evaluation settings. The guideline has been published and can be found at the following link: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022270>. WHO is planning a multi-stakeholder consultation later in 2021 to discuss evidence generation and RUTF re-formulations especially regarding cost reductions and improving access.

WHO guideline development on complementary feeding of infants and children

WHO is working to provide updated global guidance on complementary feeding of infants and children to promote optimal growth and development. The importance of complementary feeding for appropriate child growth and development was reaffirmed by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2018 when Member States were called upon "to promote timely and adequate complementary feeding in accordance with the guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child, as well as guiding principles for the feeding of the non-breastfed child 6 - 24 months of age." The new guideline will update the 2003 PAHO Guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child and the 2005 WHO Guiding principles for feeding non-breastfed children 6 - 24 months age. An initial meeting of the guideline development group is planned for 2 -

²³ https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Comm_health_care-2020.1

²⁴ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240031814>

²⁵ <https://foodsystms.community/one-health/>

²⁶ <https://foodsystms.community/food-safety-knowledge-and-risk-assessment-2/>

²⁷ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240031814>

²⁸ <https://vimeo.com/user145891411/download/582499862/08f1e83e18>

4 December 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland with the specific outcome to have consensus on a proposed outline for the guideline and the specific questions to be addressed.

WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Diet and Health

Saturated fatty acids, *trans*-fatty acids, total fat, carbohydrates and non-sugar sweeteners:

Four meetings of the NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health were held since the last report to CCFL: the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th meetings, the last three of which were held virtually. At the meetings, the NUGAG reviewed evidence from updated systematic reviews for saturated fatty acids, *trans*-fatty acids, total fat and non-sugar sweeteners and finalized evidence-informed recommendations for all of these nutrients as well as carbohydrates (including dietary fibre), taking into consideration the quality of the evidence, but additional criteria including the balance of evidence on benefits and harms, values and preferences, resource implications, priority of the problems, equity and human rights, acceptability and feasibility. Guidelines for all nutrients are being finalized, following a public call for comment on the draft total fat guideline held in April 2021 and calls for comment on the carbohydrates and non-sugar sweeteners planned for late 2021.

Polyunsaturated fatty acids:

At the 13th meeting, evidence was reviewed from an updated Cochrane review on the effect of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid intake on cardiovascular disease, and several recently published and submitted systematic reviews on the effects of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid intake on other health outcomes identified by the NUGAG as important, including diabetes, cancer, neurocognitive function and depression. Evidence from another Cochrane review assessing health effects of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid intake in pregnant women was also preliminarily reviewed. Evidence from two additional systematic reviews assessing health effects of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid intake in pregnant women and children will be reviewed and recommendations finalized at the meeting of the NUGAG to be held virtually in late 2021.

Dietary patterns:

The systematic review has been finalized and will be reviewed and recommendations formulated at the meeting of the NUGAG to be held virtually in late 2021.

Low-sodium salt substitutes:

Issues related to the use of low-sodium salt substitutes to reduce sodium/salt consumption will be discussed due to increasing need and requests for WHO guidance as to whether it would be an effective public health approach for reducing sodium/salt intake in populations. NUGAG will review the evidence from the updated systematic review and formulate recommendations at the next meeting of the NUGAG to be held in late 2021.

WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions

Currently four guidelines on policy actions are being developed by the NUGAG, namely nutrition labelling policies, policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing and fiscal and pricing policies, and school food and nutrition policies. Following the first meeting in December 2018, the second meeting was held in December 2019 during which the NUGAG reviewed the draft systematic reviews and formulated draft recommendations on nutrition labelling policies, policies to restrict food marketing and fiscal policies, and also discussed and finalized the scope, PICO questions and priority outcomes to guide the undertaking of the systematic reviews and subsequently to formulate the recommendations for the guideline on school food and nutrition policies.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of virtual meetings were held in 2021 to progress the finalization of pending guidelines. The third meeting was held virtually on 8, 10 and 12 March 2021 during which the NUGAG reviewed the systematic review evidence and formulated recommendations on school food and nutrition policies while the fourth meeting was held also virtually on 5, 6 and 9 July 2021 during which the NUGAG reviewed the systematic review evidence and formulated recommendations on policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing. Furthermore, the fifth meeting is planned to be held on 13, 14 and 17 September 2021 with a view to review the systematic review evidence on the effectiveness of fiscal policies and formulate the final draft recommendations on fiscal policies to promote healthy diets.

To support the development of the guidelines on four policy actions to improve food environment, reviews of contextual factors were conducted, including on values; resource implications, including the costs and cost-effectiveness of interventions; equity and human rights; acceptability, reflecting the perspectives, attitudes and opinions of consumers, government and industry and their support of the policies; and feasibility, focusing on the feasibility of developing, implementing, administering, monitoring, evaluating and enforcing the policies. These reviews of contextual factors complement the evidence on effectiveness of those policy actions when formulating the recommendations.

Elimination of industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids

In May 2018, WHO called for the global elimination of industrially produced of *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) by 2023, highlighting as a priority target of the WHO's 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13) which guides the work of WHO during 2019 – 2025²⁹, and released the REPLACE action framework to serve as a roadmap for countries to implement the prompt, complete and sustained policies for elimination of industrially produced TFA from the food supply. In May 2019, WHO released the first progress report (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331300/9789241516440-eng.pdf>), together with six REPLACE modules (<https://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/replace-transfat>) which provide technical background information and propose practical steps to support governments to achieve the elimination of industrially produced TFA from their national food supply. To achieve successful elimination, governments should pass either of the two best-practice policy measures which are outlined in the L and E modules: 1) Mandatory limit of 2 grams of TFA per 100 grams of total fats and oils in all foods; and 2) Mandatory ban on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) as an ingredient in all foods.

On 9 September 2020, WHO held a high-level launch event to release the second progress report, “*Countdown to 2023: WHO report on global trans fat elimination 2020*” (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334170/9789240010178-eng.pdf>). The progress report described the global, regional and national situations and progress over the past year in countries; and discussed challenges and opportunities for future action. Some key messages of the report highlighted the importance of developing and implementing best-practice policy measures, strengthening national regulatory capacities including laboratory capacities to measure TFA content in food and advocating for regional or sub-regional regulations to expand the benefits of TFA elimination policies.

The third progress report is currently being prepared to continue monitoring and reporting country actions and achievements which have been made to date towards achieving the 2023 TFA elimination target. Accelerated efforts are being made by Member States over the past year and as part of WHO's support in increasing country impacts, WHO has been undertaking a series of capacity-building workshops to strengthen countries' regulatory capacities for implementing and enforcing policy measures. In addition, to further support the implementation, enforcement and monitoring of best-practice TFA policies, WHO has also developed video tutorials on the WHO global laboratory protocol³⁰ for assessing TFA to support countries' efforts in strengthening their laboratory capacities.

Population sodium/salt intake reduction

Following the adoption of the UN Political Declaration on non-communicable diseases in 2011, in 2013, the World Health Assembly endorsed the Global action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases 2013-2020, together with nine global NCD targets which include a 30% relative reduction in mean population intake of sodium by 2025 with a goal of <2000mg/day. In 2017, four sodium reduction interventions were included in the updated Appendix 3 of The Global action plan which was published as the “best buys” and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs. These four best buy interventions included: 1) Reduce salt intake through the reformulation of food products to contain less salt and the setting of target levels for the amount of salt in foods and meals, 2) Reduce salt intake through the establishment of a supportive environment in public institutions such as hospitals, schools, workplaces and nursing homes, to enable lower sodium options to be provided, 3) Reduce salt intake through a behaviour change communication and mass media campaign, 4) Reduce salt intake through the implementation of front-of-pack labelling.

In 2016, WHO published the SHAKE Technical Package for Salt Reduction³¹, which was designed to assist Member States with the development, implementation and monitoring of salt reduction strategies to enable them to achieve a reduction in population salt intake. In 2021, WHO published the Action Framework for developing and implementing public food procurement and service policies to promote healthy diets³² which includes the reduction of salt/sodium intakes. The Action Framework provides an overview of how to develop (or strengthen), implement, assess compliance with, and evaluate, the effectiveness of a public food procurement and service policy.

In May 2021, WHO launched the Global Sodium Benchmarks³³ for different food categories as part of WHO's efforts in reducing the sodium intakes in populations. The global benchmarks were developed to call for accelerated action from Member States in scaling up their efforts to reduce their populations' sodium intake. They are designed to be complementary to existing and ongoing national and regional efforts and initiatives,

²⁹ The 74th World Health Assembly held in May 2021 agreed to extend the end date of the 13th General Programme of Work, which was originally for 2019–2023, to 2025. (https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74_R3-en.pdf)

³⁰ https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240018044?search-result=true&query=partially+hydrogenated+oils&scope=&rpp=10&sort_by=score&order=desc

³¹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/250135/9789241511346-eng.pdf>

³² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240018341>

³³ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025097>

and are intended to serve as a reference for such initiatives, where needed. The global benchmarks are also intended to serve as a basis for dialogue with the food and beverage industry to improve the food environment at the global level, following on from the constructive dialogue on reduction of industrially produced trans-fatty acids. In this context, a high-level dialogue meeting was held in June 2021 between the Director-General of WHO and IFBA CEOs, where IFBA member companies were requested to implement the WHO Global Sodium Benchmarks.

On June 4th, during the Geneva Health Week Food Systems Dialogues, WHO launched the Sodium Country Scorecard, which depicts standardized information on sodium reduction policies and actions on an interactive platform in WHO Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) (<https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/en/scorecard/sodium>). This single platform for sharing standardized information on sodium reduction policies and action will enable monitoring of global progress in implementing legislative and other measures to reduce sodium intake and increased accountability towards political commitments. Building on the scorecard, WHO plans to release a Global Sodium Report in 2022 that will describe the current global, regional and national situations and progress in countries; and discuss challenges and opportunities for future action.

Alcohol

The WHO Executive Board in its 146th session in Geneva in February 2020 requested, in its decision EB146(14), the WHO Director-General, *inter alia*, “to develop an action plan (2022-2030) to effectively implement the Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol as a public health priority, in consultation with Member States and relevant stakeholders, for consideration by the 75th World Health Assembly through the 150th session of the WHO Executive Board in 2022”, and “to develop a technical report on the harmful use of alcohol related to cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotional activities, including targeting youth and adolescents, before the 150th session of the WHO Executive Board, which could contribute to the development of the action plan”. A description of the process for developing the action plan and the first draft of the global alcohol action plan 2022-2030 are available on WHO’s web page³⁴. The first draft, *inter alia*, includes proposed actions for Member States, the WHO Secretariat and economic operators in alcohol production and trade to ensure appropriate consumer protection measures through the development and implementation of labelling requirements for alcoholic beverages to inform consumers about the content of the product, including essential information on ingredients, caloric value and the health risks associated with their consumption. Besides, the WHO Executive Board in its 146(14) decision requested the Director-General of WHO to review the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol and report to the Executive Board at its 166th session in 2030 for further action.

Following the publication of the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health in 2018³⁵, the WHO Secretariat implemented the Global survey on progress attained with SDG 2030 health target 3.5 with a substantial alcohol policy section that included the questions about the labelling of alcoholic beverages with a focus on practices of displaying consumer information and health warnings and legal requirements for that. Besides, the WHO EURO undertook in-depth analysis of the situation with alcohol beverage labelling in the European region that highlights the need for specific labelling policies to be developed as a part of a larger policy package.³⁶ The issue of alcohol beverage labelling and provision of health-related consumer information is on the agenda of annual dialogues of WHO Secretariat with producers, distributors and marketers of alcoholic beverages.

³⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/28-03-2020-who-to-accelerate-action-to-reduce-the-harmful-use-of-alcohol>

³⁵ https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/en/

³⁶ <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/alcohol-use/news/news/2020/06/alcohol-labelling-policies-most-countries-lagging-behind-in-promoting-healthier-choices>